INTRODUCTION

TO THE STUDY OF

REVELATION

God's Masterpiece of Prophecy

ITS APPEAL
ITS CONTENT
ITS LOCATION
ITS FORM

The FOUR FUNDAMENTAL FACTORS
OF ITS STUDY

"The Bible reserves its deeper mysteries for SUCH as are not light of mind or prejudiced...."

-Augustine.



An INTRODUCTION

To the Study of

REVELATION



DO YOU NEED HELP?

So many Christians find difficulty in reading and studying this part of GOD'S WORD that we have issued this explanatory introduction in order to stimulate and assist all Bible Students in its study so that they may receive the promised blessing. (Rev. 1: 3.)

WILLIAM ABERHART, B.A.

All Symbolic Language used in the Bible is interpreted either in whole or in part by the Scriptures themselves, and is not open to speculation of the Individual who may happen to read. Scripture must be compared with Scripture if we wish to get the mind of GOD on the hidden mysteries of His great plan.

II. Pet. 1:20-

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any PRIVATE interpretation. . . . "

REVELATION

(Written in the Isle of Patmos, about A.D. 96, a quarter of a century after the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, by the Apostle JOHN.)

Inspired by the Holy Ghost.—Rev. 1: 10. Signified by the Angel of the Lord. Sent by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Revealed and given by GOD, the Father, to the Son.—Rev. 1: 1.

LECTURE No. 1-Introduction

In the very beginning of our examination of this Book, it is well to notice the stages through which it passed in reaching the church. (Rev. 1: 1.)

First, God, the Father, revealed and gave it to the Son.

This fact throws great light upon the Master's own statement in Mark. Mark 13: 32—

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, NEITHER THE SON, but the Father.

It is evident from this, that the LORD JESUS, as the Son of Man, HUMAN, did not know while on earth, what was afterwards revealed to Him. Let the force of these words come upon us: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which GOD GAVE UNTO HIM."

Secondly, the LORD JESUS sent this Revelation by His Angel to His Church. This is in accord with His promise.

John 16: 12-13-

I have not yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.

Thirdly, the Angel signified it unto John-

The symbolic character of the Book is therefore to be expected.

Lastly, John is inspired by the Holy Ghost to write.

Hence he says, "I was IN THE SPIRIT" (Rev. 1:10.)

I have read long discussions and criticisms of the error of calling this book, the Revelation of St. John.

It appears to me, that if we are speaking of its content, then it is the Revelation of Jesus Christ; if we are speaking of its original source, then it is the Revelation of GOD, the Father; but if we are speaking of its human instrumentality, then it is the Revelation of St. John.

This is in harmony with the names of the other New Testament Books and Epistles. I see as much reason for calling it the Revelation of St. John as there is for calling the previous one the General Epistle of St. Jude, which was in reality equally the work of the Holy Spirit.

THE GENERAL ATTITUDE TO THE BOOK

Here, then, we have the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which was given us by the Apostle John in this miraculous way, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, one of the most wonderful in the Sacred Canon and yet one that is for the most part neglected. Why is this? There must be some reason.

Some people will frankly tell you that GOD never intended us to under-

stand it. "It is a glorious fancy of an old man in his dotage," say they. It is surely queer then, that it ever found its way into GOD'S HOLY WRIT, is it not?

Others assert that it is too difficult for one to understand. I admit it is difficult, and especially to one who has not given the fundamental principles and outlines of prophecy their earnest attention. You might as well try to do Higher Mathematics without knowing the multiplication tables as to understand Revelation without having some little grasp of the earlier prophecies of the Bible.

A third group are quite sure that it is not important anyway. In their judgment many other writings are far more important. We are, therefore, forced to examine the reasons for its careful study.

WHY SHOULD WE STUDY REVELATION?

1. ITS SUBJECT MATTER IS SO IMPORTANT.

It is the revelation of Jesus Christ not only given by Him but also concerning Him (Chap. 1:1). Every earnest student should therefore desire to study a book that purports to give him a clearer vision of the CHRIST. There is no other Book that makes such a claim as this in its opening verses. This claim should appeal to every Christian.

The Theme of Revelation is the COMPLETION of the REDEMPTION that was effected on CALVARY. The greatness of this theme requires that the student should reverently approach its study with true simplicity and humility, looking to the Holy Spirit for guidance. It will not yield its fulness of truth and blessing to the idle and curious. Of this book it may be said with emphasis what Augustine said of the whole Bible—

"It reserves its deeper mysteries for such as are not light of mind or prejudiced."

2. ITS OWN INSISTENT APPEAL AND EXHORTATION.

But there is another reason why we should study this wonderful book. There is not another book in the Word of GOD which so solemnly enforces its study upon the attention of Christians, by REWARDS and PENALTIES, more explicit and encouraging.

(a) BLESSING is promised.

Rev. 1: 3-

BLESSED is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand

(b) ATTENTION is demanded.

Rev. 2: 29-

He that hath an ear let him hear, what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

(c) CAREFUL THOUGHT is called for.

Rev. 13: 18-

Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding COUNT the number of the beast.

(d) The TRUTH is declared OPEN.

Rev. 22: 10-

Seal not the sayings of the Prophecy of this book; for the time is at

(e) A PERSONAL MESSAGE by a heavenly MESSENGER.

Rev. 22: 16-

I, JESUS, have sent my angel to testify unto you, these things in the churches.

Now we must surely regard the author as an impudent boaster, if it is not in the highest interest and duty of everyone, who names the name of Christ, to read and try to understand its momentous presentations of the wonderful redemption purchased by our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE DIFFICULTY OF THE BOOK.

But the Book of Revelation is very difficult. There are several factors that enter into this feature of it.

IT IS FULL OF SYMBOLISM.

Into this book the Holy Spirit has gathered a wealth of symbols which the Bible had been accumulating for ages. The sad part of the matter is that the greatest number of people have read the Bible so carelessly or so seldom, that they come to this closing book in practical ignorance of these symbols and their import. What then?

This leaves but two courses open to them-

- (a) Either they must patiently take up these symbols, one by one, and trace them back through the pages of Holy Writ until their meaning is clear,
- (b) They may let their fancies loose and, aided by suggestions from present portentous events and from profane history, weave out a fanciful, speculative interpretation of their own. The first way is laborious, tedious, and exacting, but it is the divine way. Scripture must be allowed to interpret Scripture if we hope to get the truth of God.

We do well here to follow the advice of the Apostle, which he has laid

down as a first principle of Bible interpretation.

II. Peter 1: 20-

KNOWING this FIRST, that NO prophecy of the Scripture is of any PRIVATE interpretation.

If we follow the second or fanciful method, we shall find ourselves declaring some of the most stirring things that will later on prove entirely untrue.

To illustrate this let me call your attention to a recent instance of this. First of all read the text.

And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the Kings of the East might be prepared.

Some, in their enthusiasm, have allowed their fancies free scope in this connection, and have declared that the Euphrates River mentioned in this passage, refers to the Turkish Nation which they are pleased to call the sick man of Europe. They say that Turkey is gradually being dried up, that is, she is being driven out of Europe and will ultimately cease as a Recent events during 1923-24 have shown that this is pure fancy. Had these interpreters taken time to compare Scripture with Scripture they would have found that Isaiah, in his prophecy, has given us the true import of the passage.

Isa. 11: 15-16-

And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian Sea, and with His mighty wind shall He shake His hand over THE RIVER, and smite it IN THE SEVEN STREAMS, and make men go over dry shod.

And there shall be an highway for the remnant of His people, which shall be left from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day He came up out of the land of Egypt.

As you read this passage carefully it becomes evident that the Euphrates River in its seven streams is just as real a river as the Red Sea was a sea, in the day when Israel came up out of Egypt.

The student of Revelation must, therefore, be very careful to find his interpretation of the impressive passages of this wonderful book by comparing Scripture with Scripture. To do this the aid of a good concordance is essential.

2. ITS CONTENTS ARE OF AN EXTRAORDINARY CHARACTER.

The second factor rendering its study difficult is the extraordinary character of its contents. Its grandeur, its sublimity of thought, its imposing scenery, its gorgeous similitudes, its pregnant maxims, its significant dialogues, its stirring exhortations, its evangelic songs, its gracious doxo.ogies, ALL, not only stamp it as inspired, but give to it the majesty of a mighty revelation beyond our experience and comprehension. We, therefore, must be possessed of a simple childlike faith in order to realize fully its tremendous import.

The trouble is, that, when we read a little we begin to imagine that because some declaration is entirely beyond our experience, it therefore

cannot be literally true.

For example, take Rev. 8:7-

The first angel sounded, and there followed HAIL AND FIRE MINGL-ED WITH BLOOD, and they were cast upon the earth; and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

At first when we read a passage like this we can hardly believe that it could be possible to rain literally FIRE and HAIL. In our so-called scientific mould of mind-processes, we say, "How could it possibly rain fire and hail? One would naturally destroy the other. And furthermore, who could imagine it raining BLOOD? Where will the blood come from?"

In our peculiar reasonings, we forget how small has been our actual experience, and how little we know even about what has happened and is

happening upon the earth.

History informs us that on August 17, 1819, Captain Ross, the great explorer of the Arctic region, saw the mountains at Baffin's Bay covered for eight mines with blood-red snow many miles in depth. Saussare, the mountain climber of the Alps, found a similar phenomenon on Mount St. Bernard in 1778. Ramond found it in the Pyrennes, and Summerfeld declares the same in regard to Norway. Where did this blood-red snow come from? Simply because we cannot explain it, does not deny the fact. Latin students know that it is recorded by Cicero, that on one occasion, word was brought to the Roman Senate, that it had rained blood; also that the River Atratus had flowed with a bloody stream. (de Div. 2:27). Are we to repudiate all this simply because it is beyond our experience? The Book of Revelation is no more difficult to accept in this particular regard than the Book of Moses.

Exodus 9: 23-24-

And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and HAIL, AND THE FIRE ran along the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt,

So there was HAIL, AND FIRE MINGLED WITH THE HAIL, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

You see the Scriptures acknowledge this to be a strange phenomenon, and yet it was literal for it smote man and beast and destroyed every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field. FIRE and HAIL did exist together, notwithstanding all our scientific objections.

Shail we also deny the declarations of the Prophet Joel? Where will

such scepticism lead us to, if we continue?

Joel 2: 30-31-

And I will show wonders in the heavens and the earth BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND PILLARS OF SMOKE.

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.

So, then, let us remember, one of the greatest difficulties in understanding Revelation (in fact in understanding the whole of the Bible) is our natural bent toward treating literal statements as if they were figurative, and did not mean just what they said. This the student of Revelation must overcome if he wishes to secure the full import of its depth.

3. FAILURE TO GRASP THE THEME.

The third difficulty in understanding the Book of Revelation is found in the slant or preconceived viewpoint of the reader himself. In all Scripture study of Epistles or Books, the first and most essential step is to ascertain the theme of the whole. The verse by verse, and chapter by chapter reading will lose much of its value until this point has been ascertained. You might just as well try to carry through a hymn in a wrong key as try to understand a book of the Bible without first ascertaining its theme, about which each chapter and each verse bears its message,

The Book of Revelation is not an unfolding of human history. It does not purpose to give us a sacred history of the world from Pentecost on. It is the apocalypse of Jesus Christ, the complete revelation of the great Redeemer of Mankind in the consummation of His great work.

In Revelation we have the concrete presentation, that forces upon us in a most impressive way, the actuality of the statement of the great Apostle

Paul-

Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you WILL PERFORM IT UNTIL THE DAY OF JESUS CHRIST.

II. Tim. 1: 12-

Phil. 1:6-

I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.

As you read Revelation, my dear fellow student, you will have brought before you the consummation or winding-up of the Great Redemption accomplished on Calvary's Tree.

Have you comprehended its grand importance? Have you felt its effect upon your heart? If so, then you can look into the book and fear not. But if you have not, then the things written therein should make you pause and seriously consider that some day, no one knows how soon, you may be one of those described by our Lord—

Luke 21: 26-

MEN'S hearts failing them for FEAR, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

Reader, may the LORD help you to be serious about this matter.

TEST QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW. Lecture No. 1

- 1. (a) About what date was the Book of Revelation written?
 - (b) Who was the writer? Where was he?
 - (e) What was the source of his information?
 - (d) What great event had just happened previous to this?
- 2. (a) Explain Mark 13:32, "Neither the SON."
 - (b) In what way was Revelation anticipated by the LORD?
- 3. (a) Discuss the suitability of the title, "The Revelation of St. John."
 (b) Is it in harmony with the names of the other New Testament Books and Epistles?
- 4. Name three attitudes of mind that have prevented some people from understanding it.
- State two reasons why the Book of Revelation should be studied and understood.
- Name the five points of appeal that are made in the Book to encourage its study.
- 7. (a) What is the first factor that makes the Book of Revelation so difficult?
 - (b) Why should this prove so difficult to the reader?
 - (c) What two courses are open to the student? And which is the divine way?
 - (d) Illustrate the fanciful method, and show its folly.
- (a) What is the second factor that renders it difficult?
 - (b) If a declaration of this Book should be entirely beyond our experience must it therefore be symbolic?
 - (c) Illustrate and prove this from the Book.
 - (d) Is Revelation different in this respect from the Book of Moses and the prophets?
- 9. (a) What is the third difficulty in its study?
 - (b) Explain fully the theme of the Book of Revelation.
 - (c) Is it an unfolding of the History of the Churches?

He is wise who masters carefully what he reads as he proceeds....

LECTURE No. 2-The Point of View

In the study of all PROPHETICAL DECLARATIONS of the Bible it is most essential that the reader should get the point from which the Prophet has viewed the subject matter of his prophecy. We have all heard of the two men that approached a statue from two different directions and wrote descriptions of what they saw. How different were their stories! Were you to pick up the story of the first man, and approach the statue from the viewpoint of the second man you would not be able to make head or tail out of it. Why? Simply because you have the wrong view-point.

Not long ago I read an article on that chapter of Isaiah's on the Suf-

fering One.

1sa. 53: 5-

But He WAS WOUNDED for our transgressions, He WAS BRUISED for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace WAS upon him; and with His stripes we are healed.

The writer called attention to the Past Tense of each of the verbs (was wounded, was bruised, was) and therefore he concluded it could not refer to a future Messiah. He then proceeded to argue that it must have referred to the Prophet himself or to the Israelitish Nation. Had this writer compared Scripture with Scripture he would have found that his whole deduction was false and that the verse was spoken from a future standpoint into which the Prophet had been transported by the Spirit of GOD. You remember that it was from this passage that the Ethiopian Eunuch was reading when Philip got into the chariot beside him.

Let the WORD itself interpret-

Acts 8: 34-35-

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him, JESUS.

You therefore must note in reading this 53rd chapter of Isalah that the Prophet had been transported by the Spirit away forward into the Day of the LORD when Israel will once more be gathered back into their own land, and will realize the truth of Peter's statement on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2: 36-

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that GOD HATH MADE THAT SAME JESUS, WHOM YE HAVE CRUCIFIED, BOTH LORD AND CHRIST.

Israel will lose, in that glad day, their blindness and recognize that the suffering Saviour was their Messiah, and then the words of the prophet will be the words of the Nation, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

How important then it is for the student of Revelation to get into the point of view in which the Apostle John found himself on this occasion. Failure here will be most disastrous.

THE TIME DIVISIONS OF REVELATION

Three period divisions are made by the Spirit with regard to the Introduction, Body and Conclusion of Revelation.

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.

The Introduction is plainly the Vision immediately past; the Body, the things which are in existence at the point of time from which the prophet is viewing the Revelation; the Conclusion, the things which shall be hereafter or after the period in which he stands.

It is evident from this that no definite information or understanding of Revelation can be secured until we know the point of time spoken of as the present, the things which are now, from which the count is made.

THREE VIEWPOINTS ARE POSSIBLE

A moment's reflection will show you that three viewpoints are possible in the interpretation of Revelation, each of which will produce entirely different findings.

(1) There is the Preterite or wholly past View.

This places the prophet with his back to the future. They say he is attempting to record in a secret, mysterious symbolic manner the events of the past and the secrets of Christianity. They claim that the reason for his mysterious writing lies wholly in the danger there was at the time to the lives of the prophet himself and his fellow Christians. This is the uniform view of the Modernists who cast doubt upon all prophecy of the Bible.

- (2) The next position is known as the Historical or partially present and partially future view. They place the Prophet in the present age, the Day of Grace, and tell us that Chapters 1-3 are the history of the church from its inauguration to the day of the Rapture. Then from Chapter 4 to the end we have the things that shall be hereafter.
 - (3) The last is known as the Prophetic or Future view.

In this view the Prophet is transported to the same position as the prophets of the Old Testament were, when they uttered their wonderful declarations. He is in the day of the Lord. That day that is ushered in with terrible judgments. The things which he saw was the vision of the Church, the Body of Christ, after the Rapture, in the heavens. The Things which are, are the conditions, religious, political and judicial that are taking place during the ushering in of that terrible day of the Lord. And the things which are to be hereafter are described as being in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

WHICH OF THESE THREE IS CORRECT?

Here, then, we are face to face with our first vital problem. The solution of this will give us the proper viewpoint, and without this proper viewpoint we shall make no head or tail out of the declarations that are made.

I feel it incumbent upon me, therefore, to call your attention to THREE particular features that may help you to come to a decision on this matter.

(a) The INTRODUCTORY PREFACE SPEAKS OF ITS CONTENTS AS YET FUTURE.

In other words, the things mentioned were not to begin in John's time, i.e., in the Day of Grace-

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND.

The phrase "AT HAND" in Scripture refers to a future event NOT THEN PRESENT.

This will be readily seen by reference to the preaching of John the Baptist. You remember the burden of his message was, "Repent for the

kingdom of heaven is AT HAND." The kingdom of heaven was not then present, but was ABOUT TO COME, i.e., it was future. John urged Israel to prepare, and declared that if Israel would get ready, that the kingdom would be immediately established by the Messiah, who was coming into their midst, and whose shoes he was not worthy to unlatch. Israel would not have the Lord Jesus to reign over them, so the kingdom was not established and the disciples could well ask the question of the Lord as he was about to depart-

Acta 1: 6-

Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

When the Spirit therefore says that the time is AT HAND, He means to inform us that the time was future to John's Day. In this connection it is interesting to note that this statement is repeated in Chapter 22:10. Thus the whole Book of Revelation is enclosed between these two great sign-posts, declaring it to be a future prophecy.
(b) AGAIN THE REDEMPTION CRY TELLS US

In the opening sentence after the salutation we have the REDEMP-TION SHOUT.

Rev. 1: 7-

BEHOLD, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.

This clearly refers to His COMING for ISRAEL. The word "COME" is never used in Scripture to refer to the Rapture. At the Rapture, the Saviour does not COME: He only appears in the clouds.

If then at the opening of this wonderful revelation the Coming of CHRIST is imminent, we know that the Rapture must have taken place, and the church would be in heaven.

This is exactly what we find in the vision that follows this opening cry-The Christians have become Kings and priests unto God (c.f. Rev. 1: 6).

This cry corresponds to the Midnight Cry that aroused the virgins of the parable.

Matt. 25: 6-

And at midnight, there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.

When we examine this in the light of the context, we soon see that this cry that aroused the virgins went forth in the midst of those terrible events described by our Lord in the preceding chapter, and therefore occurs after the rapture of the church, and just before the Coming of the Lord.

IN THE THIRD PLACE THE TIME IS STATED.

Surely when the Spirit is careful to give us the exact position of the Prophet, it behooves us to take heed.

Rev. 1: 10-

I was in the Spirit on the LORD'S DAY, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.

The LORD'S DAY or the DAY of the LORD is the time when the Lord puts His hand the second time, to redeem Israel.

It does not in any passage of Scripture ever refer to the FIRST DAY of the WEEK. Test it out and see. Try to substitute SUNDAY for the expression in other passages.

Mal. 4: 5-

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of that great and dreadful DAY of the LORD.

I. Thess. 5: 2---

For yourselves know perfectly that the DAY of the LORD so cometh as a thief in the night.

II. Peter 3: 10-

But the DAY of the LORD will come as a thief in the night; etc. etc.

Now, if we cannot substitute Sunday for the expression in any of these passages and make any sense of them, why should we do so in this one case in Revelation? Let us once more bear in mind that "No prophecy of

the Scripture is of any PRIVATE interpretation." (II- Pet. 1: 20.)

Is it not more reasonable to suppose, that the prophet was here standing in the same position that Isaiah was, away after the church has been taken out, when Israel will see the consummation of the Redemption effected on Calvary's Tree? If so the whole of Revelation is future to this

IS REVELATION A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH?

They tell us that Chapters 2 and 3 contain a history of the church in its seven stages or periods from the day of the Apostle John until the

Rapture and that we are now in the Laodicean Period.

I have no objection to the many valuable lessons that have been drawn from this Historical View of these chapters. In fact Scripture gives warrant for a two-fold interpretation of Prophecy, the first SHADOWY, Historical, the second LITERAL and Exact. Let me illustrate:

Take Malachi 4: 5-

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of that great and dreadful day of the Lord.

This passage plainly declares that Elijah, who was translated away back in the days of Israel, is to return to this earth just before Christ comes again. There can be no mistake about this. It is so plain.

Years pass on, and John the Baptist is about to be born. His father, Zacharias, goes into the temple and is told by the Angel that the child will go forward in the spirit and power of Elijah.

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, etc.

You see that the angel quoted from Malachi 4. John was not to be Elijah, but he was to act like Elijah. He was, therefore, a shadowy fulfilment of the prophecy. In a general way he preached as Elijah will preach when he comes-

To clear away any doubt on this matter, it is well to note that John the Baptist distinctly declared that he was NOT Elijah.

John 1: 19-21-

And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who are thou?

And he confessed, and denied not: but confessed, I am not the CHRIST. And they asked him, what then? Art thou Elias?

And he saith, I AM NOT. Art thou that prophet?

And he answered NO.

JESUS Himself corroborates this.

Matt. 17: 10-12-

And his disciples asked him saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?

And Jesus answered and said unto them, ELIAS TRULY SHALL FIRST COME and restore all things.

But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him

It is thus evident that there is a shadowy and literal fulfilment of prophecy. We must be careful however not to let the shadowy displace the literal. The second and third chapters of Revelation could not literally refer to seven stages in the Church's History for several good and sufficient reasons.

REASONS CONTRARY TO HISTORICAL VIEW OF REVELATION

1. The Seven Churches are spoken of as co-existent and contemporaneous and in no place is any hint given of consecutive stages.

What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches, WHICH ARE IN ASIA. A PARK TO ALLOW

Rev. 2: 7-

He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the CHURCHES.

A careful reader will notice that the Present Tense and the Plural Number are constantly used.

2. There is no mention of GRACE throughout both of the chapters.

It is all works, works, WORKS.

C.f. Rev. 2: 2, 9, 13, 19 and 3: 8, 15-

Vs. 2 . . . I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience . . . Vs. 9 I know thy WORKS and whom the control of the control o

These are in no wise like the messages of Grace that are addressed in the Epistles to GOD'S Church of our Day.

3. Some of the Churches are told that they will continue to exist into the Tribulation Period. Hence they can not refer to stages long past-

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: Behold, the Devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have TRIBULATION TEN DAYS.

Whenever the word "DAY" in the Scriptures is preceded by a number it refers to the literal 24 hour day.

Smyrna, therefore, shall last as a church ten days into the Tribulation. It therefore cannot literally refer to a stage or period before the Dark Ages

(b) Rev. 2: 22-

Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her INTO GREAT TRIBULATION, except they repent of their deeds.

The Church of Thyatira shall last through the Tribulation Period, and therefore cannot literally refer to the church as it was in the Dark Ages.

(c) Rev. 2: 16-

Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

This statement could never be made of a church on this side of the Rapture. We know that the blessed hope of the church is the Appearing of Christ, when we shall be caught up to meet him in the air. If then there was danger to the church of Pergamos, that the Master might come with the two-edged sword in His mouth, we know that Pergamos must exist during the Tribulation Period after the Rapture. Pergamos then cannot literally apply to a PAST Church, but to a FUTURE one.

(d) In the same way it may be shown by Rev. 3: 3, that the church of Sardis is also future to this day of Grace, and as they are all co-existent, it follows that they all refer to the churches or denominations that are to be

left behind after the Rapture of the True Christians takes place.

DISTINGUISH, PLEASE. I do not mean by this that any Christians are to go through the tribulation. On every side today we have those who would separate the Redeemed of the Lord into two camps, according as they have this or that peculiar belief or experience.

Some demand that they shall be wholly sanctified. Others claim that they must speak with New Tongues, before they shall be taken out at the

Rapture.

The Scripture is very plain in this matter.

I. Thess. 5: 9-10-

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together

By examining the context we shall see that the wakefulness or sleepiness referred to here is SPIRITUAL and not physical. Thus it does not depend upon our spiritual advancement but upon the DEATH of Christ and His Precious Blood that we are taken to heaven.

Again—I. Cor. 15: 51—

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, bue we shall

The word "ALL" as used here could not mean otherwise than that every Christian is to be taken at His Appearing.

But there are in every Church some who have never been born again,

and who do not know the Saviour personally.

These shall continue in their formal worshipping as they do today, and shall be among the number who will constitute the APOSTATE DENOM-INATIONS AND SECTS that will go to make up the Religious Babylon of the Last Days as described in these two chapters of Revelation.

4. In the fourth place, in the cases of Smyrna and Philadelphia, men-

tion is made of the synagogue of Satan.

Now, while there are some religions today that are no doubt in reality the religious worshipping of the Devil, yet None of any import openly declare themselves to be of the synagogue of Satan. This expression refers definitely to the worship of the Anti-Christ that will be established when He sets himself up to be God and demands that every person shall worship his Image if he wishes to buy or sell.

The Anti-Christ will not be revealed until after the Appearing of Christ and therefore again we have a hint of the future viewpoint of Revelation.

II. Thess. 2: 3, 4, 7, 8-

Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there be a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. . . .

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth:

will let until he be taken out of the way.

Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.

You see at once that the Spirit of God, who is hindering the Mystery of Iniquity from doing its most diabolical work, must be taken out of the way before the WICKED One, the Anti-Christ can be revealed. Hence there could be no worship of the Anti-Christ until after the Rapture and therefore no synagogue of Satan in the real sense of the word. Therefore, the churches of Smyrna and Philadeplhia must exist during the Tribulation

Week and not in the ages of the past-

5. And last of all, if all the seven ages (so-called) were revealed to the Apostle as to take place in this Dispensation of Grace in which we live, how then could the Great Reformers, living back in the days following Thyatira, have ever looked for the appearing of Christ when the ages of Philadelphia and Laodicea had not yet come? Nay, even more, how could the Apostle Paul, who lived long before the ages of Pergamos or Thyatira, have looked, with great expectancy, for the glorious hope and the Imminent appearing of the Lord, and Saviour, Jesus Christ? Was he mistaken, or did he willingly deceive those who believed him to be inspired? If so, then his Epistles are not at all reliable. This is the conclusion we are forced to, if we accept the Historical View of the Churches of the first TWO chapters of Revelation.

Some one may say, Where did the Apostle Paul state that he looked for the Appearing of Christ? A moment on this.

I. Thess. 4: 15-17-

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that WE which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first;

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

The use of the First Person Pronoun, "WE," places the writer, Paul, among those who were to be alive when Jesus, the Lord, appeared. How easily he could have said "THEY" if he did not wish to include himself.

Phil. 3: 20-21-

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

Again, the Apostle says, "We look for a Saviour." But one other passage is even more definite than these.

Titus 2: 11-13-

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; LOOKING for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and Our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Apparently it was one of the doctrines taught by the Apostle to help man to live right in this world. He taught them to look for the Appearing of Christ in that day. It therefore follows that there was no prophecy of

Historical Ages for the church known in that day.

I submit then to you that the prophetic viewpoint at which the Apostle stood as he beheld the visions of Revelation was in the Day of the LORD. The things which he saw, concerned the Church, the Bride, in heaven. The things which are now, were the conditions of the Apostate church and the judgments that fell upon the earth. The things which shall be after these, were the Millennium and the New Heaven and the New Earth, which shall be the abode of God's own people

Dear Reader, this viewpoint will alter your attitude to the whole prophecy of the Book. I want you to consider it carefully and see if it is true.

I am persuaded that if men and women, everywhere, and especially in our Churches, were to realize that here in the Book of Revelation is the record of these events, they might gladly and anxiously read them and flee for safety to the Rock of Ages. So many right under the sound of the Gospel are drowsily going through forms and ceremonies, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. May God arouse them before it is too late, and they pass into these Apostate Church conditions described in chapters 2 and 3.

Never mind the other fellow, brother or sister. Tell me, have you a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ?

He is calling you home.—Come today.

REVIEW QUESTIONS-LECTURE No. 2

- 1. Show why the viewpoint of the Prophet in every case is essential.
 - (a) What are the three period divisions of Revelation?
 - (b) What must be known before these period-divisions are of value?
- Name and explain the three view-points possible.
- 4. (a) What is the significance of the phrase "at hand" in the Bible?
 - (b) Why do you believe that the Redemption Cry of Rev. 1: 7 does not apply to the present dispensation?
 - (c) Do you believe that the "LORD'S DAY" of Rev. 1: 10 refers to Sunday? Give reasons.
- State the three features that helps us to decide which is the proper viewpoint?
- (a) Does Scripture give any warrant for a shadowy, Historical Interpretation of Prophecy? Explain.

 - (b) Was John the Baptist in reality Elijah?(c) Is the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Revelation a history of the Church in 7 great periods? Give reasons.
- (a) Will any true Christians go through the Tribulation period?(b) When will the "synagogue of Satan" be set up?

 - (c) What must take place before the Anti-Christ is revealed?
 - (d) Did the Apostle Paul believe and teach that the Appearing of Christ was so imminent that it might occur in his day?

"Common sense is more important than education, but a combination of the two is irresistible."

LECTURE No. 3-Its Majestic Form

We have called your attention thus far to the character of the Content of Revelation, its Appeal, and the Location or View-point of the Prophet. Two things more demand our attention:—

1. The Comprehensiveness of the Final Issues in the Completion of the Redemption of GOD, and-

2. The Finger-board Divisions of the Great Tribulation Week.

To these we shall set our minds in this lecture.

When the Final Redemption of God begins to be brought to its consummation, there are so many different parties concerned, and the awe-inspiring events affect the one and the other in such varied ways, that often the SPIRIT of GOD must return in His story, to explain a phase of the question that could not have been made plain before and must be understood before further intelligent progress can be made. This feature that I ask your attention to in this opening paragraph is most important. Please make sure that you grasp it.

The student of Revelation must, therefore, become acquainted at once with the five distinctive parties or groups of people or entities, concerned

in the final consummation of GOD's Great Redemption.

(a) THE BRIDE OF CHURCH.

First of all we have the Church of God, those who have been redeemed by His Blood. You will find them presented in heaven assisting, beholding, praising their Redeemer, and finally returning with Him to reign on the earth.

(b) THE APOSTATE CHURCH.

Secondly, we have the religious Apostates, who are then entirely void of the Spirit's appeal. They are the ripened stage of those professors or Church Members who never possessed conviction of their sinful souls' need, and never, therefore, opened their heart to the Saviour. They are those who built their hopes on their merits or good works, and despised or heeded not the Work of CHRIST on the Cross of Calvary. Here they are, poor, deluded, hell-bound sinners, with all their outward show of forms and concerning and works works.

ceremonies and works, works, WORKS.

The student of Revelation will see this Church Apostate in its sevenfold divisions characterized and warned, and finally when its apostasy has
come to the full, it is terribly destroyed by the Anti-Christ and his followers.

(e) THE GENTILE WORLD AT LARGE.

In the third place we have the record of the completion of the Times of the Gentiles. We shall see the Worldings, who seek the treasures and pleasures of the world. The great world-powers and politicians in their international disputes and fightings are revealed. Then, too, the terrible judgments that fall upon them in all their blasphemy, and their final gatherings to the Valley of Megiddo, is vividly portrayed in the chapters dealing therewith.

(d) THE TERRIBLE EVIL ONES.

The reader does not get very far into this wonderful and awe-inspiring story, until he comes face to face with the Trinity of Evil in its mock counterfeit of the Divine Trinity. Three terrible creatures are mentioned—

The Dragon (Satan), the Beast with the Seven Heads (Anti-Christ), and the Beast with the two horns (the False Prophet). These in combined ferceity make their last great struggle to overcome the Saints and to overthrow Christ's mighty work of redemption. They are, however, finally cast alive into the Lake of Fire, where they are tormented day and night forever.

(e) LAST, THE BRIGHT SPOT OF ALL-THE TRIBULATION SAINTS.

Those who are faithful to GOD throughout this terrible trial are carefully traced through the Book of Revelation. The student should note as he reads chapter by chapter, the various reference to those splendid martyrs, their sealing and their ultimate suffering.

Time after time you may be thrilled as you see how these faithful ones will not bow down to the Beast and receive his mark, even though they are put through the most horrible and excruciating pain. They love not their

lives unto death.

These then are the five different groups concerned in the consummation of the redemption of Christ, and you will now understand what I mean when I say, that often the Spirit of God must return in His story, to explain a phase of the question, that could not have been made plain before and must be understood before intelligent progress can be made.

This leads us to examine the Form of the composition in which the

Book of Revelation is set.

ITS MAJESTIC FORM

Many people who attempt to understand Revelation pick the Book up and begin to read verse after verse, and chapter after chapter, as if it was a history of future events chronologically arranged. They expect, for example that the events of Chapter 6 precede Chapter 8, etc.

Following this course they do not go very far before they find them-

selves in great confusion.

Let me illustrate.

Rev. 6:12-

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and THE SUN BECAME BLACK AS SACKCLOTH OF HAIR, AND THE MOON BECAME AS BLOOD.

As you read this verse you immediately conclude that here in the sixth chapter the sun's light has been entirely cut off from the earth as the final great earthquake is in process. How now will the rest of the events take place—from Chapter 6 to the end?—in utter darkness? Read on—

Rev. 8: 12-

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the noon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the days shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

Immediately you are in the midst of confusion. The Sixth Chapter told us that the sun was completely darkened. How then can it be that only one-third of it is darkened in this Eighth Chapter?

But let us continue:

Rev. 16: 8-

And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

Now our confusion is worse confounded. How is it possible for the sun to be completely darkened and yet scorch men with great heat and fire?

The whole difficulty lies in the fact that we have looked upon Revelation as chronologically and historically arranged, when in reality it is set in a most majestic DRAMATIC FORM. It is evident that Rev. 6: 12 follows in point of time Rev. 16: 8, and Rev. 16: 8, no doubt, follows Rev. 8: 12. These declarations have been placed here and there as we find them because that phase of the question had to be introduced before the rest of the story could be understood. Then later details were brought in to connect up the events as they related to the group of persons which they affected the most.

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Unless, therefore, we can fully grasp its DRAMATIC structure, we are bound to be handicapped in properly dovetailing together the various statements made in it, and will end in utter confusion.

THE OUTLINE PLAN

There are 22 chapters in the Book of Revelation, and these may be divided into five sections of four chapters each, leaving Chapters 21 and 22 as the conclusion.

Each of these sections deals with one of the groups of people referred to in our introduction. I append below the chapters correctly arranged under their headings.

A .- THE BRIDE OF CHRIST IN HEAVEN.

Chap. 1 In Rapture.

The Father's Throne.
The Lamb (The Bridegroom).

19 The Return from the Marriage to Earth.

B .- THE APOSTATE CHURCH ON EARTH.

Chap. 2, 3 Characterized and Warned. 17, 18 Judged and Destroyed.

C.—THE GENTILE WORLD (POLITICAL)

Chap. 6 Seal Judgments (Outline). Chap. 8, 9, 10 TRUMPET Judgments (Detail)

Read !! D.—THE TRIBULATION SAINTS (MARTYRS)

Chap. 7 Sealing for Protection 11 Their Testimony 14 Their Martyrdom

15 ON the SEA of GLASS

E-THE TERRIBLE EVIL ONES.

Chap. 12 Satan

The Two Beasts 13

16 Armageddon

20 Judgment.

F.—CONCLUSION.

Chap. 21 New Heaven and New Earth. 22. The Eternal Conditions.

May I now be allowed to sketch briefly the story of Revelation, follow-

ing the plan as outlined above. The first chapter starts out with a Vision of the Church, the Bride of Christ in heaven, in the Bridegroom's hand under the figure of the seven golden candlesticks. Here the Bridegroom's appearance is carefully described for us.

Turning now to Chapters 2 and 3 we read about the things which are. In these chapters we have the description of the churches of the world as they will be when all the true Christians are taken out of them. It is a sad picture and should impress the reader with the folly of mere religion. Here are the churches all boasting of their works, WORKS, WORKS, and yet they have departed entirely from their first love. Unless one gets the full import of this section he will never be able to understand fully the depressed condition in which the Apostle found himself as he beheld the throne of God in the fourth chapter. It is certainly most heart-rending as the thought grips you. There are so many people in the world who have read and heard over and over again, the absolute necessity of the New Birth and an actual personal acquaintance with the Saviour of the world, and yet they go on in their so-called religion without giving the least heed to the plain

After John had seen the conditions which were in the Apostate Church, once more his attention is called to the heavenly scene and there he sees. the Throne of God, and upon the throne, the Book with the Seven Seals.

Immediately he hears the voice of the Mighty Angel challenging the vast host, "Who is worthy to open the Book and to break the seals thereof?" As John looks over the vast audience, he sees that not one of their number even so much as raises his eyes towards the Book or the Throne, for not one of them had the faintest idea of being worthy. What a contrast between these and the people of the Apostate Church with their great works. Ah, my friends! those who shall be counted worthy are those who know the Grace of God and the efficacy of the Blood of Christ. John gave vent to his feelings by weeping. Then suddenly from behind the throne there appeared the Lamb of God, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Christ of Calvary. All eyes were at once turned towards him, and with one accord the vast assemblage broke into that wonderful doxology

Rev. 5: 9-10-

And they sang a new song, saying, "Thou are worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

And hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth.

The words of this subline and gloriously evangelic song show us that this vast assemblage could be no other than the body of true Christians, who had been taken out of the earth at the Rapture. Thus we see, that the Appearing of Christ must take place before the Seal judgments begin.

As the Book of Seals is opened in the Sixth Chapter we begin to realize that the Gentile world powers are forming and that the judgments are falling upon them. These seals give us an outline of the whole period which the eighth and ninth and tenth chapters will give us in detail.

Before these judgments are described in detail, we are introduced to the Tribulation Saints in the Seventh Chapter, where we see them being sealed so that they will not be affected by the judgments that are to fall. In the eleventh chapter these faithful martyrs are again before us. Here we see the two witnesses who have been sent to inspire and encourage the Tribulation Saints. Following this, we lose sight of them for a moment as the twelfth and thirteenth chapters are given us, in which we come face to face with the Terrible Evil Ones who are to wage the final struggle against Christ and all those that love Him. In the fourteenth chapter the result of this struggle is brought before us in the vision of the martyrs that have been slain for the Word of God and His testimony, and who are seen in the fifteenth chapter upon the Sea of Glass before the Throne of God.

In the sixteenth chapter we are back again with the Gentile Powers and the great battle of Armageddon is before us, when all the kings of the earth have united together, and have given their power into the hands of the Anti-Christ, who has gathered them into the valley to besiege the old City of Jerusalem and the people of Israel that are gathered therein.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters we get a vision of the Anti-Christ and his followers, previous to this, judging and destroying the Apostate Church. The nineteenth chapter again gives us a vision of the Bride of Christ and the bridegroom returning from heaven to set up the kingdom on earth.

The twentieth chapter then gives us the Final Judgment, and the twenty-first and twety-second conclude with the new heaven and the new earth and the eternal conditions of the future.

This is the story of Revelation in its summarized form and with this carefully in mind the student will be enabled to examine the detail, arrange and correlate the various statements, and be blessed in the understanding of its great truths.

One thing more remains for our consideration.

THE FINGER-BOARD DIVISIONS OF THE TRIBULATION WEEK.

In all prophecy the question of time divisions is of great importance. So it is here. The student must have carefully in mind the great sign-posts of the period so that he may properly locate any event. So, if the consummation of Christ's redemption is to take place during the 70th prophetic week of Israel's history, it is quite necessary that, we approach our study with some idea of the time-divisions of this week. Especially is this impor-

tant when we remember the many different parties concerned and the numerous events that are to take place.

As we read over Daniel and Revelation three expressions of time will come to our attention, viz.—(1) 42 months, (2) 1260 days, (3) Time, Times, and half a Time or Times and Seasons.

The question at once arises: Are these expressions all referring to the same period, or do they represent different portions of time?

A few passages will make this plain.

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod; and the angel stood, saying, rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for IT IS GIVEN unto the Gentiles; and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

And I WILL GIVE power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three score days, clothed in sackcloth.

You see we have two of these passages brought together in this passage. In verse two the Present TENSE would indicate that the Holy City was, at that time, being trodden under foot by the Gentiles, and that the Temple Worship would continue for FORTY-TWO MONTHS, or that is three and a priss or that in the half years.

In verse three, the Future Tense would indicate that the testimony period of 1260 days would follow the former period of forty-two months. Hence these two periods are not identical, but are consecutive. The prophecy of Daniel gives us the same impression,

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and IN THE MIDST OF THE WEEK he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate. the desolate.

Here we read that the Anti-Christ shall confirm the convenant for temple worship for the seven years, but in the midst of the week, he shall cause the daily sacrifice to cease. Again, in Rev. 13: 5, we read of the Anti-Christ continuing to conquer for 42 months, until he gains sufficient power to make war upon the Saints (vs. 7)2 her you are if the parmy all the man & record

Now, the only point we have to decide is:

Does the Time, times and half-a-time refer to either of these two consecutive periods, or is it distinct and separate, a third period?

If it corresponds with either of the two, it is evident that the 1260 days period will end the week. Is this so?

Daniel has cleared this matter up for us.

Dan. 12: 11-12-

And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand, two hundred and thints dains. two hundred and thirty days.

Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.

From this passage it is plain that the 1260 days do not end the week, or the cessation of the Daily Sacrifice in the Temple Worship to the setting up of the Abomination Image as described in Rev. 13: 14-18, is to be 1290 days, i.e., 30 days after the 1260 day testimony period.

And in the twelfth verse of this same passage above, Daniel further speaks of some enduring the terrible tribulation until 1335 days have come, i.e., 75 days after the 1260 days period. Thus we conclude that the Time, Times and half-a-time constitutes these 75 days (30-30-15) immediately following the 1260 day period, and it is during this period that the vials are poured out and the greatest of all tribulations takes place.

These, then, are the Finger-Board Divisions of this period (42 months—Temple Worship; 1260 days—Testimony; 30—30—15 Terrible Tribulation.

My task is finished. I have tried to help you to be able to attack the study of this most wonderful Book in a sane intelligent way. Whether we can understand it or not, however, the fact remains that the LORD JESUS CHRIST will bring through to its full completeness the redemption that He accomplished on Calvary's Tree.

May God bless you.

-WM. ABERHART, B.A.

REVIEW QUESTIONS ON LECTURE No. 3

- Name and describe the five distinct parties, or groups concerned in the events of Revelation.
- 2. Show that Revelation is not Chronologically arrange.
- 3. Write from memory the Dramatic Outline Plan of the Book of Revelation.
- 4. Sketch briefly the story of Revelation following your plan outlined above.
- 5. Are we in the Second Seal today? Give your Scripture proof-
- 6. How many period divisions are there in Daniel's Seventieth Week? Name them and state their duration.
- 7. (a) At what point is the Abomination Image set up?
 - (b) When are the 144,000 Jewish Martyrs slain?

The Lord is broadcasting a lot of messages from Heaven, but we must be tuned-in.



